



HIGH PRAISE — Christian ballet troupe Ballet Magnificat of Jackson performs on the Trustmark Stage at Christmas on Ice in Madison on the evening of Nov. 19. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Christmas on Ice

Holiday event opens to large crowds

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

"Overwhelming, in a word," is the word director Steve Hutton used to describe opening weekend at Christmas on Ice in Madison, a celebration of the birth of Christ in a setting of winter attractions.

Christmas on Ice features include:

- The Christmas Story Trail depicting the birth of Christ, with an evangelism tent for sharing the Gospel with individuals.
- 7,200-square-foot ice skating rink.
- 125-foot-long ice slide.
- Trustmark Stage for concerts and performances.
- Pepsi Pavilion for birthday, corporate, and church parties.
- 32-foot-tall animated Christmas tree with hourly light shows.
- Food and drink concessions.

Christmas on Ice, which is being sponsored by Baptist Health Systems, the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, and a number of area business supporters, is located on the Baptist Health System Madison Campus near the intersection on Interstate 55 and Highway 463 in

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Christmas on Ice

"Bring your family to the coolest event in the South!"

NOVEMBER 17-JANUARY 6
in Madison, MS

Features:

- 7,200-square-foot ice skating rink
- 125-foot-long ice slide
- Trustmark Stage for concerts and performances
- Pepsi Pavilion for birthday, corporate, and church parties
- 32-foot-tall animated Christmas tree with hourly light shows
- Food and drink concessions

Baptist Health Systems

Land, evangelicals call for reform of nation's stance on immigration

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — Richard Land, outgoing president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, and nine other evangelical Christian leaders have joined together to call on U.S. President Obama and the U.S. Congress to act quickly next year in an effort to reform the country's immigration laws.

The evangelical leaders, all members of the Evangelical Immigration Table (EIT), on Nov. 13 asked Obama and the leaders of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives to meet with them in early 2013 to discuss a bipartisan solution to the controversial issue.

"It's past time for us as a nation to deal with this vexing and divisive issue," Land told Baptist Press on Nov. 14. "The foundation and structure for fair, just and comprehensive reform legislation is there and needs to be embraced by both parties for the good of the country."

The EIT leaders asked the president to meet with some of their representatives during the first 92 days of his new administration. They asked for a meeting with congressional leaders in the first 92 days of the next session. They chose 92 days because the Hebrew word for immigrant, "ger," appears 92 times in the Bible, they said.

They are prepared to back a proposal "that reflects our Christian values and builds the common good," the leaders said. In their letters to the nation's political leaders, the EIT signatories reiterated their call for legislation that:

- "Respects the God-given dignity of every person;
- "Protects the unity of the immediate family;
- "Respects the rule of law;
- "Guarantees secure national borders;
- "Ensures fairness to taxpayers;
- "Establishes a path toward legal status and/or citizenship for those who qualify and who wish to become permanent residents."

The EIT, a new coalition at the time, cited the same six principles in a June statement signed by 150 evangelicals. More than 20 Southern Baptists endorsed that document titled, Evangelical Statement of Principles for

Immigration Reform.

In that statement, the signers acknowledged efforts to repair what many of them describe as a broken system have resulted in polarization and a misrepresentation of "each other's positions as open borders and amnesty versus deportations of millions. This false choice has led to an unacceptable political stalemate at the federal level at a tragic human cost."

The others signing the Nov. 13 letters with Land were Leith Anderson, president, National Association of Evangelicals; Stephen Bauman, president, World Relief; David Beckmann, president, Bread for the World; Noel Castellanos, chief executive officer, Christian Community Development Association; Robert Gittelsohn, president, Conservatives for Comprehensive Immigration Reform; Samuel Rodriguez, president, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference; Gabriel Salguero, president, National Latino Evangelical Coalition; Richard Stearns, president, World Vision United States, and Jim Wallis, president, Sojourners.

They sent letters to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Speaker of the House John Boehner, and House Minority

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Our Thanksgiving prayer

Among the original American holidays on our calendar, Thanksgiving often harbors our warmest thoughts and deepest sentimentalities.

The World Book Encyclopedia describes it this way: "Thanksgiving is usually a family day, celebrated with big dinners and joyous reunions. The very mention of Thanksgiving often calls up memories of kitchens and pantries crowded with good things to eat. Thanksgiving is also a time for serious thinking, church services, and prayer."

Indeed it is. In our present-day, politically correct/revisionist culture, we can be discouraged from understanding the true meaning of the holiday.

We have lately been induced to believe that Thanksgiving is composed of little more than a bacchanalian orgy and football games, devoid of religious significance. After all, a lot of Americans act that way. Nothing could be farther from the truth, as evidenced by a brief review of unrevised history.

The first Thanksgiving was observed less than a year after the Plymouth colonists came ashore in Massachusetts. The harsh first winter in the New World wiped out nearly half the colonists, but 1621's bumper harvest put an end to the famine and its associated problems.

There was such rejoicing in the colony that the people began to set aside a time of celebration and thanksgiving for their abundance — which they readily acknowledged came from God.

The observance grew so rapidly that Massachusetts Governor William Bradford declared a formal three-day thanksgiving feast to begin on July 30, 1623. Thanksgiving quickly took root in the other colonies and continued to be observed during the Revolutionary War.

After the Revolutionary War, President George Washington issued a proclamation that codified a special day of thanks in the young United States of America. Most of the states took Washington's lead and adopted their own days of thanksgiving at various times of the year.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln declared a national Thanksgiving holiday on the last Thursday of November, and the states soon realigned their observances.

President Franklin Roosevelt set the holiday one week earlier in 1939, to lengthen the Christmas shopping season in the midst of the Great Depression.

The U.S. Congress was not pleased, however, and voted in 1941 to return Thanksgiving to the traditional fourth



Thursday in November. They backed up their decision by creating a formal legal holiday on that date.

For thousands of years, people around the world have held harvest festivals and observed thanksgiving times for the gift of God's bounty, but the unique American holiday called Thanksgiving should hold special meaning for us, the modern-day beneficiaries of God's blessings beyond all forms of measurement.

Our agricultural system feeds us well, with enough left over to feed much of the world. More than at any time in our history, our generation is sheltered from the elements and guarded from disease. Though our military is stretched and many brave men and women are giving their lives even today for our freedoms, we are largely protected from many of the unpleasant realities of the world. When our biggest complaints are about potholes and poorly performing football teams, we're living pretty close to Easy Street.

We make a grave mistake, however, when we take all that for granted and begin to believe that we are responsible for our own good fortune and security (Deuteronomy 8:6-19), as many Americans apparently presume.

This Thanksgiving season, be sure to focus your thanks toward the One who provided the food you will eat, the home in which you will enjoy it, and the means to do all that and much, much more.

Come to think of it, that should be our Thanksgiving prayer 365 days a year.

My struggle to reach me

When I was 16, my family experienced a shattering event that forever changed our lives — the day my youngest sister was run over by our school bus. My mother lost her joy that day and never laughed again.

I made a commitment that day that I would never be hurt like that again. I withdrew inside myself, overcome with anger, grief, and resentment, symbolically burying my heart and feelings in a hole. I reasoned that if I no longer felt, I would never experience such pain.

When describing a devastating loss, people often remark, "You never get over it." I think that is true; you never do get over the death of a loved one. You just eventually learn to get through it, but you'll never be the same because the scars go with us forever. After my sister's funeral, my family and I began the journey of "getting through it" as best we could.

For many years I felt invisible to people around me because I believed the lie that I was insignificant. I didn't think I deserved God's love, success, or anything else. It also was a way of dealing with grief because being "visible" around people was just too painful. I constantly compared myself with other women and always came up short.

I became an independent beauty consultant with the goal of earning a hundred dollars a week to help make ends meet. At the time, I didn't even know how to wear makeup, didn't own a car, had no professional clothes, and no money for extras.

I got weak in the knees and red in the face when talking with anyone. My initial makeup parties were disasters, but through those failures — and many others — I learned the importance of getting up one more time than I fell down.

At a crisis point in my life, a Christian friend led me to place my faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Even though I had grown up in a Christian home and my father was a pastor, I had never until that day made faith in God personal.

What a great joy it was to discover that Jesus loves and accepts me unconditionally, despite my shortcomings and failures! The Lord redirected my life and



Guest opinion

with Sue Z. McGray

helped me learn to become "visible" by overcoming fear, insecurity, low self-esteem, regret, and co-dependency.

In my darkest and most discouraging adult moments, He demonstrated His love to me and gave me a peace that was beyond understanding.

For 37 years, I've worked with thousands of women across the nation, often observing hurt in their eyes and seeing some of the same fears that caused me to lock down my feelings and squash my dreams.

In my experience, a lot of women sabotage themselves because they don't think they deserve anything better. They put themselves in a personal prison (or someone else may have put them there) and draw bad things to themselves because they have an "I don't count" victim mentality.

To get out of this rut, or to help someone else get out of it, we first have to understand that God loves and values us just as we are. No matter how we feel or how much hurt we've experienced, staying hidden in an emotional hole is not the answer, nor is it the place God wants us to be. He has so much more for us.

A person who internalizes emotional conflict can suffer from unnecessary guilt, anxiety, sickness, and even self-rejection. Our bodies and souls are not designed to internalize sorrow, but to express it and to walk with one another through difficulties.

Today, God has me on a mission to help women step out of their personal prisons and let go of the things that hide their true beauty. My prayer is that each day I will be able to glorify God by encouraging and motivating women to become more than they ever thought they could.

see MCGRAY on p. 9

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Threat of war again hanging over Middle East

ISRAEL (BP) — The smoke trails of rockets make jagged cuts through the cloudless sky over Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Stephen Johnson (not his real name), a Christian worker among Palestinians, said he feels just as rough around the edges.

After arriving in the West Bank on Nov. 16, he fell asleep but was awakened when a rocket hit near the house where he is staying. "We are fine. A little jittery, but OK," he said.

He's not the only one who's jittery. Phone calls to friends who are believers in Gaza Strip confirmed that. "They are all OK but very frightened," Johnson said. "They've been here many times before."

The long history of conflict between Gaza and Israel has been marked in recent years by militants in Gaza firing hundreds of rockets into Israeli populations, triggering severe retaliation by Israel.

With the current fighting, it's dangerous to be in the street and there's little movement outside. Grocery stores are empty. "People have bought up supplies in case the situation gets worse," Johnson said.

They pray that "worse" won't mean "closer." The Palestinian Ministry of Interior office, for example, about 200 yards from where some of Johnson's friends live, was hit by Israeli rockets.

U.S. President Barack Obama said he supports Israel's right to defend itself and has called for Gaza to stop firing on Israel and work toward

"In these days, what do we do? We're told to be sober-minded so that we may be able to pray. What we need are people who will pray for the believers in Israel and for the believers in Gaza to be bold to share in the midst of hard times."

Ben Martin

Christian worker among Jews

peace. "There's no country on earth that would tolerate missiles raining down on its citizens from outside its borders," Obama said at a press conference in Thailand during a Southeast Asian tour.

Israel's Iron Dome defense shield intercepted some 250 rockets fired from Gaza in a three-day period, according to the Israeli army. Nearly 800 rockets have been fired since the beginning of the conflict. Tel Aviv has repeatedly been the target.

Netanyahu said Israel is ready to expand its operation. News outlets report the strong possibility of a ground offensive.

In Israel where Ben Martin (not his real name) lives, people aren't as worried about rockets as they are about the possibility of others getting involved, such as Egypt or Hezbollah, the Shiite Muslim group based in Lebanon. Egypt's president stated early in the conflict that



CONFLICT AGAIN — An Israeli Defense Forces soldier takes up a defensive position in an earlier conflict between Israel and neighboring Palestinians. The Middle East is on edge again as Palestinians continue to fire deadly missiles into Israel, only to be met with retaliation by Israel in a never-ending cycle of violence. (BP photo)

his country would not leave Gaza on its own.

"The main concern is the secondary threat," said Martin, a Christian worker among Jews. "In these days, what do we do? We're told to be sober-minded so that we may be able to pray. What we need are people who will pray for the believers in Israel and for the believers in Gaza to be bold to share in the midst of hard times," Martin said.

One believer in Israel whom Martin knows has already had the chance to share with a family while he was taking cover with them as rockets approached. "We don't just sit with our hands folded. We look for opportunities," Martin said.

Martin, Johnson, and others in the region say there is a ready harvest among the Middle Eastern peoples. Pray for safety for believers caught

in the crossfire, Johnson said, "but also that they would have opportunities to share the hope that they have."

"As you watch the news, write down the names and places, then turn the TV off and pray the news. It's not a political statement or a stand, but asking the God of heaven to invoke His will in the situation and to bring true and lasting peace. With that, He is well pleased."

Virginia Baptists dismiss church over homosexual ordination

ROANOKE, Va. (BP) — The Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV) upheld a committee's decision to end the state association's affiliation with a church which ordained an openly homosexual man to the ministry earlier this fall.

In the opening session of the BGAV meeting, messengers voted 164-426 against a motion to refer to a study committee the request that Ginter Park Church in Richmond withdraw its membership.

In October, the Virginia Baptist Mission Board's Executive Committee asked Ginter Park Church in Richmond to withdraw its BGAV membership by Dec. 31 after the congregation ordained an openly homosexual man in September.

The request stipulated that if Ginter Park Church declined to withdraw by that date, the BGAV would no longer accept its financial contributions — an action which would essentially end the church's affiliation with the state association.

At the BGAV meeting, Richmond

"We are known as a moderate convention, though I'm on the conservative end of that, and I'm at home with that but this [ordination] is a step too far."

Don Davidson

pastor of First Church in Alexandria, Va.

pastor Jim Somerville said dismissal of a church was too significant to leave only to the BGAV Executive Committee. "I believe the Executive Committee acted in accordance with BGAV principles, but this is a big decision and the Executive Committee shouldn't make it alone," said Somerville, pastor of First Church in Richmond.

He added he didn't want to open a discussion about homosexuality or church autonomy on the floor of the BGAV. Instead, he offered a motion to refer the action to a study committee to be appointed by the BGAV president, which would report at the 2013 annual BGAV meeting.

Mark Ross, pastor of Marion Church, supported the motion because

Christians have "been wrong about many things and many of us would not be here today or in our churches if we let the past determine our future."

"Let's look at what God would have us do, not in the past, but in the future," he said.

Travis Collins, pastor of Eon Air Church in Richmond, said, "The Executive Committee's action is consistent with what we have done before... It's consistent with my understanding of Scripture and probably with the understanding of the vast majority of Virginia Baptists."

Don Davidson, pastor of First Church in Alexandria, Va., said few people would be persuaded by a year of study. Instead, it would be a year of

"slow drift of being in the news and being discussed."

"We are known as a moderate convention, though I'm on the conservative end of that," Davidson said, "and I'm at home with that but this [ordination] is a step too far."

This is the first time the BGAV has dismissed a church over homosexuality, but it has addressed the issue in the past. A 1993 resolution called homosexual behavior "sinful and unacceptable to Christians" and that statement is typically included in the state association's identity documents.

A report from the BGAV's Christian life committee which drew the same conclusion was "commended to the churches" in 1998.

The BGAV's ties to both the University of Richmond and Averett University were ended over homosexuality, though Averett's association was restored last year when the school clarified its stance in a way the BGAV regarded as compatible with its position.

Thanksgiving Day is not unique only to America, but the other side of that is that no nation on the planet celebrates it with the significance that we hold. And no other nation has as many reasons to give thanks for the blessings of God upon our nation and upon our lives as we do. Early on at Plymouth Rock our early forefathers gathered with some Indians to celebrate that they were alive and that they had food to sustain them. In awesome simplicity and wonderful thanksgiving, they were grateful to God for His providence and provisions for them.

Thanksgiving Day may have turned into some kind of feast occasion for most of us, and hopefully it is a warm and wonderful family gathering for many. For some, it may be just another day to sit, watch sports, eat, and maybe even complain about the problems that we have. But it is Thanksgiving Day and this year there is no whining permitted. Now that is not the law of the land, though maybe it should be. It is a great thought that we should not be caught up in the stream of whining, complaining, fussing, and bellyaching about life.

Recently, I went into a restaurant with some friends at noon and hung over the cash register there was a fairly large sign that said there was a \$5.00 charge for anyone who was whining. I walked up to the lady at the cash register. I said, "Mam, are you the lady in charge of collecting that money?" She smiled and said, "I certainly am!" I said, "I am not complaining about it. I was just asking." Others were coming into the restaurant and they got in on the conversation. We were all caught up in a light, non-whining moment. It was good.

I am not in a position to enforce the non-whining prohibition at this Thanksgiving because, of course, you can do what you want to do and you can, if you wish, spend all day long in search of the next thing that you can twist your face into a frown over, whine, and fuss about. If you so choose, have at it, but you would be far better suited if you would enter the no-whine zone of life and especially on Thanksgiving. Although I may not be able to force you not to whine, I



Thanksgiving – No Whining Permitted

want to encourage you to look at this day and maybe every day with a different perspective. At least for one day, search for those things for which to be thankful. Allow me to share a few things with you that may deliver us all from getting a fine from the whine police.

The first thing is to concentrate on what you do have and not on what you don't have. It sure sounds simple, but it is not easily done. Most folks keep a pretty good list of things that they would like to have — this and that, a trinket here, a new thing there. I think about the many people in the northeast who have been in the cold for weeks now. They do not have any electricity even if the flood waters did not get them and the wind did not tear up their homes. It would be a wonderful day if they could have electric power coming to their homes. Do you have power coming to your home? Do you have some nourishing food? Do you have some warm clothes? Do you have a few friends? Do you have a genuine faith in the Lord Jesus? My, I am telling you that you are blessed. So keep on thinking and look at what you have and do not dwell on what you do not have.

The second thing that I would suggest is that you spend a few

minutes thinking about all of the days that you were well rather than highlighting above everything the days that you were sick. If we get the flu for a few days, it is amazing how quickly we forget about all of the wholeness and wellness that God gives us. I know that there are people who are struggling with major, painful health issues, and I know that many people are wrestling with the daily grind of trying to overcome debilitating problems. But for this day, think back and give thanks, and almost invariably, you will find many times over the good health and the wonderful blessings that God has brought to your life beyond the days of sickness.

The third thought that I would share with you is do not spend a lot of time whining about people who are whining. Look to those folks who with a simple smile can light up the room. If people want to whine, complain, and bellyache about everything in life, that is their prerogative. But you are not required to be infected by their spirit. You do not have to even whine about them whining. But it would be advantageous if you would find those folks who encourage, lift, and warm your heart. It is not that they have to do

anything for you nor do they have to give you anything. All that they have to do is be what they are and bless your heart.

A fourth thing that I would suggest is that on Thanksgiving instead of whining about your church not being perfect, ask God to help you work on your own imperfections. Jesus spoke a word to us concerning this process when He said don't be trying to pick out the speck in your neighbor's eye, when you have a beam in your own eye. It may be a revealing experience, and it will certainly help you immensely as well as bless others if you spend some time thanking God for helping you remove the two-by-four sticking in your eye.

This Thanksgiving do not complain about gas prices, but be thankful that you have a car. Let me put it in perspective with the worldwide population. Recently, I was reading some stats that indicated that in the worldwide population just less than 10 percent own a car. I was shocked when I read that, but then I began to think about how many people are packed in the world's cities and have transportation there like buses and trains. Those of us who own cars tend to complain about having to pay so that we can go everywhere we want to as fast as we want to go when most folks do not even have a car.

All of that is said just to remind me and maybe some of you to count our blessings. Look at our assets rather than our ailments. Think about our blessings rather than our burdens. Focus on the celebrations and not our complaints. Give some time to think about our delights rather than our appetites. Enjoy the eats and forget the emptiness. Focus on our friends and not on our foes. See the good and not the gross. Give attention to the happy hereafter and not just the horrible here. Change the direction of our thinking, and on Thanksgiving Day we will not be whining, but we can join with a host of folks saying, "Praise the Lord for His mercy endureth to all generations." Happy Thanksgiving!

The author can be contacted at jfutral@mbcb.org.

OBITUARY

Jimmy Latham, Miss. Baptist pastor, dies

Jimmy Latham of Kilmichael died August 28 at North Mississippi Medical Center in Eupora, from complications of brain cancer. He was pastor of Community Church, Kilmichael; Fellowship Church, Bellefontaine; and Crape Creek Church, Stewart. He was a member of a number of Masonic organizations.

Latham is survived by his wife of 47 years, Sara Ann Williams Latham; three children: Jeff (Cheryl) of Kilmichael, Jayne (Jimmy) of Madison, Al., and Brad (Christy) of Stewart; and nine grandchildren. He was buried in Crape Creek Cem-



LATHAM

etry with pallbearers being his grandsons. His granddaughters served as honorary pallbearers.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital

photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.



McMillan retires as MBHC head

Edward McMillan (left), retired professor of history and dean of graduate studies at Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College in Clinton, was recently honored with a reception upon his retirement as executive secretary of the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission (MBHC), a position he held for two decades. Pictured with McMillan is his wife Carnette. Anthony Kay of Clinton replaced McMillan as executive secretary on August 1. (Special photo courtesy of MBHC)

Miss. Baptist churches celebrate anniversaries

CLINTON, Ms. (Special) — The Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission (MBHC) has announced that a total of 51 churches, representing 6,900 years of Kingdom work, will reach significant milestones in 2013 and are urged to celebrate those anniversaries, according to MBHC Executive Secretary Anthony Kay.

Kay replaced retired longtime MBHC Executive Secretary Edward McMillan on Aug. 1.

Each church that informs MBHC of their significant anniversary celebration will receive a framed certificate and letter of commendation. A significant anniversary is defined by the commission as 200 years, 175 years, 150 years, 125 years, and 100 years.

The commission requests that any church celebrating a significant anniversary that is not included in the list below should contact MBHC at P.O. Box 4024, Clinton, MS 39058. Telephone: (601) 925-3434. E-mail: mbhc@mc.edu. Mississippi Baptist churches celebrating significant anniversaries in 2013, followed by the Baptist association in which each church holds membership, include:

175 Years

(Organized 1838)

Bucatanua (Clarke)
Elim (Clarke)
First, Grenada (North Central)
First, Jackson (Metro)
First, Olive Branch (X-tended Missions)
First, Ripley (Benton-Tippah)
Fellowship (Lauderdale)
Liberty (Mississippi)
Liberty (Union County)
Ludlow (Scott)
Magee's Creek (Walthall)
Mount Zion (Pike)
Palestine (Simpson)
Pleasant Hill (Calhoun)
Salem (Lauderdale)

150 Years

(Organized 1863)

Center Hill (Monroe)

125 Years

(Organized 1888)

Auburn (Lee)
Briar Hill (Rankin)
Central (Lauderdale)
Concord (Franklin)
Dry Creek (Winston)
First, Amory (Monroe)

200 Years

(Organized 1813)

Hopewell (Franklin)

First, Hickory

(Benton-Tippah)
First, Laurel (Jones)
First, Plantersville (Lee)
Galilee (Rankin)
Goodwater (Simpson)
Holmesville (Pike)
Mount Pisgah (North Central)
Oakdale (Rankin)
Pleasant Hill (Smith)
Rocky Hill (Smith)
Sardis (Smith)
Shaw (Mid-Delta)
Sherman (Lee)
Union North (Covington-Jeff. Davis)
Union Seminary (Jasper)

100 Years

(Organized 1913)

Center Hill (Pontotoc)
Coat (Simpson)
Duncan (Mid-Delta)
First, Bude (Franklin)
First, Inverness (Mid-Delta)
First, Tchula (Holmes)
Fayette (Union)
Goshen (Simpson)
Hebron (Pontotoc)
Hurricane (Marion)
Oakland (Benton-Tippah)
Tomnolen (Webster)
Unity (Greene)

MS POSITIONS

MORRISON CHAPEL BAPTIST CHURCH, CLEVELAND, IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME YOUTH/ASSOCIATE PASTOR. Resumes may be sent to Personnel Committee, 196 Morrison Chapel Road, Cleveland, MS 38732. Job description is available.

WEBSTER COUNTY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION CURRENTLY HAS AN OPENING FOR ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONS DIRECTOR. Please send resumes to Rev. Wade Stevens, PO Box 260, Mathiston, MS 39752, or email mathistonfbcp@bellsouth.net.

TILLATOBA BAPTIST CHURCH, TILLATOBA, MS IS SEEKING A PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER. Interested parties may mail resumes to: Tillatoba Baptist Church, Attn: Youth Minister Search Committee, P.O. Box 101, Tillatoba, Ms 38961.

WEST LAUREL BAPTIST CHURCH, LAUREL, MS IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR A FULL-TIME PASTOR. Send resumes to: Pastor Search Committee West Laurel Baptist Church 1400 West 5th Street Laurel, MS 39440.

PLEASANT GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, MS, IS SEEKING A PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC. Please e-mail resumes to PGBC@telepak.net or mail them to Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, 2162 Old Hwy 84 W. Brookhaven, MS 39601.

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1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Just for the Record



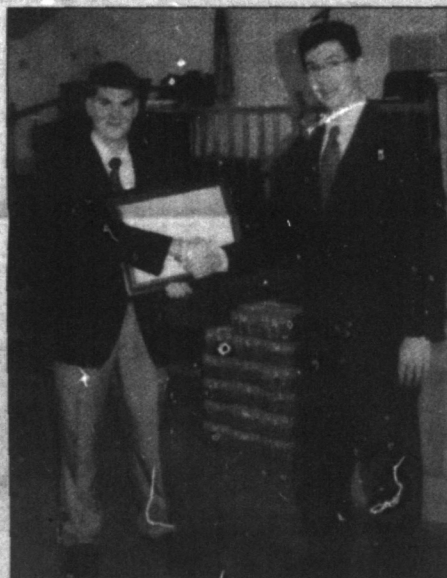
CHICKASAW ASSOCIATION held an M Night event recently, hosted by Parkway Church, Houston. Associational churches were invited to set up stations in the church gym to be part of a festival prior to the services. Stations included face painting, popcorn, inflatable games, balloon art, cotton candy, and more. Over 200 people participated. Ken Hester, speaker; Kevin Williams and Jennifer Love, music. Shown are Brenda Woodruff painting the face of Katelyn Collins.



The senior adults of **BRANCH CHURCH, MORTON**, attended the Scott County Senior Adult Spring Rally at Sebastopol Church. Shown are the participants. Bobo Phillipson, pastor.



ENON CHURCH, WALTHALL ASSOCIATION, held a pastor appreciation day Oct. 28. Shown are DeeDee Boyd & Lynn McEwen presenting pastor David Hedden and his wife Cindy with a clock and various other gifts from Sunday School classes.



CALVARY CHURCH, MERIDIAN, ordained Samuel D. Jennings to the ministry Sept. 23. He is shown with J. Curtis Pace, pastor, New Bethel Church, Philadelphia.

CARROLLTON CHURCH, CARROLLTON, honored Estelle Cooper after retiring after over 70 years as a member of the choir. Shown are Bernard Taylor, Cooper, and Fletcher Moorman.



CRESTVIEW CHURCH, PETAL, recently ordained Jeremy Sumner as deacon. Shown are pastor Stephen Smith and Sumner.



MACEDONIA CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, recently held a pastor's appreciation day. Nathan and Lori Case, Garland and Gale Boyd, and Patricia and Jerry Peagler were presented letters of appreciation for years of dedicated service.

Just for the Record



HURRICANE CREEK CHURCH, SANDY HOOK, held a baby dedication Oct. 14. Shown with the families is pastor Curtis Roland.



EMMANUEL CHURCH, COLUMBIA, ordained Blake Vann as deacon. Shown are Vann with wife Sandy and pastor Chris Cawley.



FIRST CHURCH, NEW ALBANY, ordained Dave Cherry as deacon. Shown are pastor Rick Blythe, Debbie Cherry, and Cherry.



SALEM CHURCH, KEWANEE, ordained pastor Jason Alan Falls Nov. 4. Shown are Charles Black, Mike Smith, Richard Johnson, Dave Caves, Falls, Greg Massey, R.W. Shelton, Abe Ward, and James Smith.

In other Church News:

➤ **First Church, Terry**, exceeded its Margaret Lackey Offering for State Missions offering goal of \$2,500 by collecting \$2,585.

➤ **Union Church, Pearl River Association**, held a turkey trot 5K as a fundraiser for their school. There were 69 participants.

➤ **Improve Church, Columbia**, is presenting Scenes of Christ, a walk through the life of Jesus, Dec. 1 - 2, 5:30 - 8 p.m.

➤ **Algoma Church, Algoma**, is presenting its 21st annual drive-thru Nativity Dec. 7 - 8, 6 - 9 p.m. Busses, vans, and cars welcome.

➤ **Holly Springs Church, Foxworth**, is presenting its Hanging of the Green Nov. 25, 10 a.m.

➤ **Leflore Church, Holcomb**, is presenting a Merry Hee Haw Christmas, Nov. 30 and Dec. 1. Fri., dessert supper, 6 p.m., \$3; show only, 7 p.m., \$5; Sat., BBQ plates, 5 p.m.; show, 7 p.m.; plates and show, \$10 adults, \$7 children 10 and under; show only, \$5.

➤ The ladies of **New Hope Church, Como**, and **Harmontown Church, Como**, joined for a fellowship meal Sept. 22, with approximately 37 in attendance. Susie Hill, speaker; dinner served by pastor Donny Hill and two other men from New Hope Church.



PARKWAY CHURCH, HOUSTON, ordained Jason Brassfield to the gospel ministry Nov. 11. Shown are pastor Randy Rinehart and Bufford Usry with Brassfield, his wife Amanda, and children Emma and Peyton.



Several girls from **TILLATOBA CHURCH, TILLATOBA**, participated in the church's GA kick off day.



BISSSELL CHURCH, TUPELO, ordained Vic Bonner as deacon Nov. 11. Shown are pastor Roger Smith, Carla Bonner, Bonner, and parents Mr. & Mrs. Victor Bonner.

Observer: Court balance likely not upset by election

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — Social conservatives lamenting a slew of Election Day losses on Nov. 6 might take solace in this: Barring a surprise retirement, the ideological makeup of the U.S. Supreme Court likely will remain the same for the next four years.

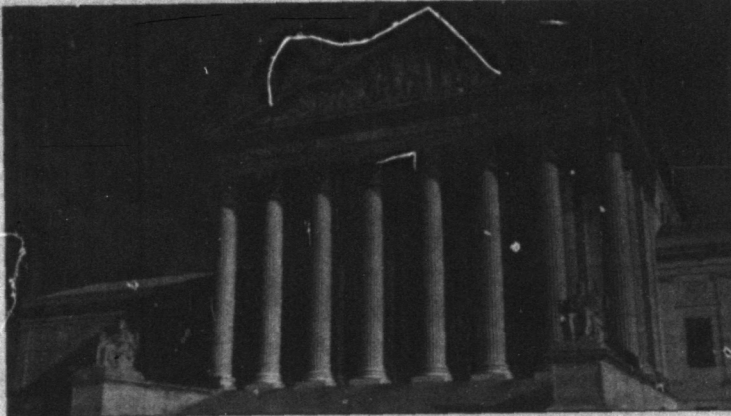
So says Liberty Counsel's Mathew Staver, who has argued two cases before the court and whose organization has filed about 30 briefs with it.

According to the organization's web site, Orlando-based Liberty Counsel is "an international nonprofit litigation, education, and policy organization dedicated to advancing religious freedom, the sanctity of life, and the family since 1989, by providing pro bono assistance and representation on these and related topics."

Staver said absent unforeseen health complications involving the sitting justices, the court will likely be the same ideologically when Obama leaves office. Only one of the justices, ailing 79-year-old liberal voting bloc member Ruth Bader Ginsburg, seems likely to retire, and that would not change the court's balance because her replacement by President Obama likely would be a liberal as well, Staver said.

That would be great news for social conservatives, who view the high court and the federal courts below it as integral to their cause. Abortion was legalized by the Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade*, a 1973 case social conservatives hope is eventually reversed. Some court observers are predicting the justices might consider cases next year that involve the fight over legalization of gay marriage.

The reason the court could look the same in four years is simple. Justices typically time their retirement so that the po-



U.S. SUPREME COURT

litical party that appointed them gets to name their successor. That means a president of their particular party must be in The White House when they retire.

President Clinton, a Democrat, nominated Ginsburg, and her replacement, if she retires, would be named by Obama, another Democrat.

Republican presidents nominated all five members of the court who are considered part of the conservative voting bloc. If they hold to tradition, the ones who are eyeing retirement will hold off in the hopes that a Republican will win the White House in 2016.

Of the court's four-member liberal voting bloc, Clinton nominated two and Obama two. Justice Anthony Kennedy, appointed by Republican President Ron-

ald Reagan, often provides the swing vote between the two voting blocs.

Nothing, of course, is guaranteed, and surprise retirements do happen. Liberal Justice Thurgood Marshall, nominated by Democratic President Lyndon Johnson, was the first African American to serve on the high court. He retired in 1991 due to poor health during the administration of Republican George H.W. Bush, who replaced Marshall with conservative Clarence Thomas, the second African American to serve on the high court.

Marshall died two years later. Marshall had voted with the pro-*Roe* majority in 1973, and Thomas, a reliable conservative vote, has since gone on record as opposing *Roe*.

Death also can have an impact. Former

Chief Justice William Rehnquist, a conservative nominated by Republican President Richard Nixon, passed away in 2005 while in office. However, his death did not have an impact on the court's ideological balance because his successor, John Roberts, was nominated by a Republican president, George W. Bush, to serve as chief justice.

Four justices are in their 70s: Ginsburg (79), Antonin Scalia (76), Anthony Kennedy (76) and Stephen Breyer (74). "That's something that we certainly need to be in prayer about — for the good health of the justices," Staver said.

Even if Obama doesn't change the ideological makeup of the nation's highest court, he'll still have a major impact on the lower federal courts — the appeals courts and district courts, Staver said. As with the Supreme Court, the president in power nominates all federal judges, who must then be approved by the U.S. Senate.

"He'll have more of an impact on the court system than any previous president, even if he appoints the same number [of judges as other presidents], because unlike any previous president, Obama appoints people who are ideologically in line with him," Staver said.

Other presidents, Staver said, appoint "some people who are ideologically in line with them" and some who "go off in a different direction" ideologically.

If Ginsburg is the only Supreme Court justice to retire in the next four years, then the high court potentially could be a major issue in the 2016 presidential race. That's because two members of the court's conservative bloc — staunch conservative Antonin Scalia and swing vote Anthony Kennedy — would be 80 that year.

Interfaith experts debate the impact of election on Mormonism rise

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (BP) — Although devout Mormon Mitt Romney lost his presidential bid, Christians should be prepared for higher visibility and credibility for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), an interfaith witness expert and a seminary professor told Baptist Press.

"When Mormon missionaries knock on people's doors, they will be seen in a more positive light when people know that [Romney] was once a Mormon missionary. They will likely gain entrance into homes where they formerly would have been denied," said Tal Davis, executive vice president of MarketFaith Ministries in Tallahassee, Fla., who served with the North American Mission Board for more than 20 years training Christians in interfaith witness.

The ascendancy of a Mormon leader to the cusp of the presidency, Davis said, "testifies to the fact that most Americans no longer regard Mormons as out of the cultural mainstream, as was true in the 19th and early 20th centuries."

Ant Greenham, assistant professor of missions at Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., noted that the growth in Mormon acceptance pre-dates Romney's presidential bid.

Mormonism may be on track for complete acceptance in American culture, Greenham said, but it would be "due more to society's postmodern tendencies than to ongoing Mormon efforts to achieve ac-

ceptance." Still, Romney's faith may have taken a toll at the polls, Greenham said.

"Despite the postmodern tendencies of many that cause them to become less and less interested in differences between faiths,

the additional attention given to Mormonism would have made many people more, rather than less, wary of this solidly Mormon candidate," Greenham said.

Davis, meanwhile, reflected, "Some people may have been wary of his Mormon beliefs, but I doubt that was the primary

reason they may have voted against him" in view of the serious economic and social issues aired during the campaign.

Both Greenham and Davis encouraged Christians to become better informed of their own faith and the particulars of the Mormon belief system.

"Based on a number of very gracious receptions LDS leaders have afforded me and Southeastern students, they strongly desire acceptance within the broader Christian mainstream," said Greenham, a citizen of South Africa who spent time in the Mideast before coming to study and teach in the U.S. "They are offended when Christians call them a 'cult' and they downplay, but don't deny, unique elements of their faith in discussions with influential outsiders."

For Christians, Greenham said, knowing their faith "revolves around the essentials of our biblical, Gospel-focused faith, repeatedly affirmed through Christian history."

After that, Christians should explore various resources to learn more about the distinctives of Mormonism and what separates it from historic Christianity. "Mormonism is not Christianity," Greenham said, "no matter how much Mormons would like to be considered part of the Christian mainstream."

For Greenham, the Republican presidential nominee should not be the centerpiece of conversations with Mormons. "I would not make Romney an issue in witnessing encounters," he said. "The issue is where you put your ultimate trust, not the strengths and weaknesses of some celebrity who happens to share the faith of the person to whom you are speaking."

Christians "should engage Mormons with love and friendship," Davis advised. "Nonetheless, we cannot ignore the need to share Christ with them. Mormonism is undeniably a false system and those in it are lost and need the salvation that only Jesus can provide."

Resources suggested by Davis and Greenham include:

- www.marketfaith.org
- www.4truth.net
- www.mrm.org
- www.watchman.org



DAVIS



GREENHAM

Ways to minister to Mormons, recommended by Greenham, include:

■ **Pray:** "The most important thing we can pray for is that they come to know the true God and the true Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord," Davis said, alongside prayer that Mormon friends and acquaintances be exposed to biblical truth.

■ **Learn:** "Take some time to find out more about Mormonism," Greenham said, noting that a firm foundation in what one believes and knowing about Mormon beliefs can yield a more confident witness to them.

■ **Be open:** "Christians should look for opportunities to witness to Mormons all the time," Greenham said, noting that a Christian has no idea when a available moment may present itself.

■ **Invest time:** "We should understand that they are a deeply moral, but lost group of people," Greenham said. "Christians should thus be prepared to befriend Mormons and look for opportunities to engage them in meaningful biblical-oriented conversations over a considerable length of time."

Seeing a Mormon come to Christ is not likely to be a one-day development, but rather a considerable investment of time and love into the relationship, he said.

■ **Encourage:** "Christians should realize that leaving the [Latter-day Saints] church is a major step," Greenham said. "They should be prepared to embrace those doing so in welcoming Christian communities."

Churches should be ready to come alongside Christians coming from a Mormon background to encourage them in a commitment that will have great personal cost, Greenham said.

Syria civil war exacts larger human toll as Christians respond

NORTHERN JORDAN (BP) — They shot him nine times in the legs and torso. Faraj (not his real name) shows the ugly scars to prove it. A bullet in his knee can't be removed. His crime? He was a teacher in Syria and spoke out publicly against the regime of Bashar al-Assad when anti-government protests began last year.

Thousands of people on both sides have died for less in a civil war now reducing large parts of Syria to dust.

Faraj survived his wounds and escaped with his wife and five children to Jordan,

where more than 250,000 Syrian refugees crowd towns and dirt-caked tents in desert camps along the border.

The family occupies a few dingy rooms in one such town. Wet cardboard hangs from the leaky kitchen ceiling, where the night chill of oncoming winter seeps in. Faraj wants to work, but there are few jobs for Syrians in Jordan's already hard-pressed economy. Many Syrian children have been out of school for nearly two years because of the war.

Faraj's 10-year-old daughter Aisha (not her real name)

sits beside him, bright-eyed and eager. She dreams of studying English, but remains at home while her father teaches her as best he can.

"Every day my daughter is crying to go to school, and no one listens to her," Faraj says. "Every day I go to the school near here, but they tell me to go away and they will call."

No call comes. The schools are full, reflecting how Jordan is straining under the load of refugees fleeing regional conflicts from Iraq to Libya.

Faraj has new hope. A Sunni Muslim, he was welcomed to the area by Jordanian

Christians at a local church. They helped his family find shelter and brought them food, a fan, and a refrigerator. They treated him like a human being — a friend, even.

They also gave him a Bible, which he now reads with growing interest because of what it contains: truth. "It doesn't lie," he says, with an expression of near-amazement, "and Christian people are honest. They don't lie. This is what interests me."

Could he ever forgive those who tried to kill him? "Yes, I might," he answers, "because I am reading the Injil [New

Testament] every day, and I am seeing many things in it about forgiveness, love and peace. These are things I want to have."

More and more, such events are occurring among the overwhelmingly Muslim refugees streaming by the hundreds of thousands across Syria's borders into neighboring countries. Several million more have become wanderers in their own country as the war spreads. Terrified, exhausted, and angry, they need the most basic necessities. But they also need someone who cares.

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Staff Changes



BETHEL CHURCH, OXBERRY, recognized William B. McDaniel upon his retirement after serving the church as bivocational pastor for 48 years. His resignation was effective June 10. He is shown with his wife, Alyne.

ICE

cont. from p. 1

Madison.

It opened on Nov. 17. "For Saturday, I had estimated we would have 1,700 visitors. We had 3,200. For Sunday, I estimated 1,300 and there were 2,800. On Monday, we had 2,600 visitors," said Hutton, who also serves as director of missions logistics for Broadmoor Church in Madison.

All non-ice areas are free, including the Trustmark Stage concerts, lights and decorations, and the Christmas Story Trail. Tickets are \$15 for skating/sliding and include skate rental. Five dollar coupons are available at many sponsor locations. A \$99 frequent skater punch card is also available and can be used by more than one person.

Hutton said Baptist Health Systems is committed to a three-year partnership with Christmas on Ice, "but after the first four days, I think it's quite obvious that Christmas on Ice will go beyond three years."

Hutton turned serious when he spoke of the dream that is driving Christmas on Ice. "When I was walking the Christmas Story Trail on opening night to be sure everything was in place, I came across a dad standing in front of the Luke 2:4 station, holding his four-year-old son in his arms and whispering that Scripture into the boy's ear. That gets down to the real reason for doing this," Hutton said.

For more information, visit christmasonice.com. To book performances on the Trustmark Stage or to schedule parties, call the Christmas on Ice hotline at (601) 500-5970.

REFORM

cont. from p. 1

Leader Nancy Pelosi, in addition to Obama.

Messengers to the 2011 Southern Baptist Convention in Phoenix, Ariz., approved a resolution on immigration reform that called for the advancement of the Gospel of Jesus while pursuing justice and compassion. The measure urged the government to make a priority of border security and holding businesses accountable in their hiring, and also requested public officials establish after securing the borders "a just and compassionate path to legal status, with appropriate restitutionary measures, for those undocumented immigrants already living in our country."

The resolution specified that it was not to be interpreted as supporting amnesty.

MCGRAY

cont. from p. 2

We never really know the battles someone is dealing with, so I urge giving others the benefit of the doubt. Then, step out in kindness with a few words of hope and encouragement. Those few words may be the one thing that helps someone take the next step.

We can't change or fix people, but we can reflect the light of God's grace by being an encourager to those the Lord puts in our path each day.

McGray is a member of First Church in Hendersonville, Tn. Her new book, *Becoming Visible: Letting Go of the Things that Hide Your True Beauty*, is available at LifeWay Christian Stores. Her commentary appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. She may be contacted at www.suezmcgray.com.

BIBL i O C I P H E R

LSFRP NB FPBKBUKB, SAT WKS N SOL-
SND, FPSF NB GSN EB SRRIMAFBT LIKF-
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DPSOO RIGB FI WSDD, SAT FI DFSAT
EBUIKB FPB DIA IU GSA.
OMCB FLBAFN-IAB: FPZKFN-DZJ

Clue: F = T

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Acts Twelve: Five

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor with taste and respect those who are and have been special to our special friends.

OCTOBER 2012

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Mr. & Mrs. Steve Warren	Elsie McLemore
Mary Montee Rudder McEwen	Jimmy & Jo Jenkins
James & Betty Crosby	Betty Ory
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FBC New Augusta	Gene Pace
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Clyde Woods
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Robin Woods

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BCV EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.



The WMU from Kilmichael Baptist Church recently visited the India Nunnery Campus in Star, MS. The group is a generous friend to The Baptist Children's Village throughout the year and at Christmas. This is the third campus they have visited and they delivered after-school snacks for the children.

Living with Assurance • 2 Peter 3:1-18

Peter tells us in verses 1-2 that he is writing to clear up some misunderstandings about the Second Coming of the Lord. Believers were expecting the Lord to return any day, and unbelievers were scoffing and causing doubts because he hadn't yet returned. We could use some clarification on the subject today.

1. WHY ISN'T THE BIBLE MORE CLEAR ABOUT WHEN THE LORD WILL RETURN?

...in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:3-4, NIV).

The prophets talked about the coming "day of the Lord," Jesus talked about His return, the apostles looked for it at any moment. The book of Revelation doesn't clearly say, "this is the point where the rapture takes place." Why? Why do we have so many different views of the end times: Pre-millennial, Post-millennial, A-millennial, Pre-Tribulation, Mid-Tribulation, Post Tribulation?

There is one simple answer - the Lord doesn't want us to know exactly when these things will happen. A "mystery" in the Bible is something God has not revealed yet. The rapture and the

second coming fall in this category. God has not revealed the exact times, because He doesn't want us to know.

2. WHY HAS THE LORD DELAYED HIS RETURN FOR SO LONG?

Why were the New Testament disciples expecting the Lord's return in their day, and we are still looking for it today? Peter gives the simple answer.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance...Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation" (2 Peter 3:8-9, 15 NIV).

Our Lord loves this world so much, even the scoffers who don't believe in Him, that He delays His return as long

as there is a chance of one more sinner being saved. The scoffer should realize that if he would give his heart to Christ today, he could help speed up the second coming of Christ.

3. WHY THE RUSH TO GET SAVED WHEN GOD IS SO PATIENT?

...long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged

and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men... But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly

lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat... Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen" (2 Peter 3:5-7, 10-12, 17-18 NIV).

The urgency of salvation centers around the fact that the Lord will return suddenly, unexpectedly, and it will be too late to repent and get saved on the day of His coming. The coming day of the Lord that Peter writes about is the beginning of His judgment on the unbelieving world. It will be like it was in the days of Noah - the total destruction of everything and everyone who has not repented of their sins and accepted God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Bible says that unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire that is reserved for the devil and his angels where they will be in torment for all eternity. Today is the day of salvation.

Bishop is a member of Harrisburg Church, Tupelo.



Explore the Bible

with David B. Bishop

Hit the Streets • Acts 17:16-31

It's November 6, 2012. What a trenchant milestone for America's future. We use God's word to experience the coziness of his love as we quote back to God some of his own words, John 3:16. So we're not going to perish? Yippee, thank you, Lord.

Acts 17 is about learning ways to reach others with the gospel. Our culture changes with such rakish speed, it doesn't allow us to cocoon or insulate ourselves. Christ expects us to be intentional, actual, and factual in our attempts to reach others with His message of saving grace.

Vs. 16-21 Paul had gone alone to Athens and was in the market place interacting with the regular folks. Everywhere he looked was a plethora of graven images including one altar engraved "to the unknown god." He was not the typical tourist taking notes on the fine architecture and wonderful works of art, etc., but we're told he was enraged within. We might say he was becoming sick at his stomach at the idolatry of false gods. We are told there were more statues in Athens than in all the other Greek cities together.

Some of the Epicureans and Stoics took him on in the marketplace, accusing him of being an eclectic babbler.

It was the picture of a bird bouncing around in the field picking up a seed here and there, discarding and/or eating until he puts together somewhat of a meal. They thought Paul had gathered many ideas forming a mishmash about a man called Jesus and His resurrection.

(He later set them straight.) Thankfully, we are blessed with writings of Paul's, but what's in your library from these pantheists?

In Vs 19-20 Paul was taken by the authorities to the council of the Areopagus (or Mars Hill) where he was offered a free, full, fair and public hearing because he was teaching about a new religion. The Areopagus was the licensing body who determined what was permissible for Athenians to know about. He was brought not as a criminal but as a possible candidate.

Paul brilliantly made his argument to the heathens that his was not a new religion but it was simply one about

which they were ignorant. He challenged them with his knowledge of Christianity. He told them that they didn't know the God he was preaching and he wanted to introduce them to Him. In V 24-25 he tells them this God created and sustains them, and since He's a living being, He can not be represented by idols such as you have here. He also told them He sent His son to

die for sinners like yourself (v. 29-31). Conclusion: Repent and believe the gospel. It was like Paul was speaking at the Harvard of the ancient world. Were he to come speak to our modern Harvard, there would be scoffers, yes, or the ACLU would be in an interminable tailspin. I know who would win that debate. Paul's goal was to correct the disorders in their religion and to put them in the service of Jesus Christ. Not many people responded to Paul's address, and there were those who even laughed at him.

Yet and still there were those few who were willing to pursue further the idea of the resurrection. Some actually asked to hear more. As told by the ancients, one such was Dionysius who had studied astrology in Egypt where he saw the miraculous eclipse at our Savior's passion. He had returned to Athens and disputed with Paul and was converted and became the first bishop in Athens. Paul's work, again, was not in vain. He knew his subject matter.

This should be our aim to get to know people outside the church walls and engage them within their own bailiwick. Find out what "those people out there" believe, and with respect, love, and kindness connect with them and offer the good news. That would be using your knowledge of the gospel to the purest purpose.

How to measure the value of Paul's presentation? 2nd Cor. 5:10 says "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body whether good or bad." (NIV Study Bible). Be diligent promoting God's message so as to hear "Well done."

Gibson is a member of Monticello Church, Monticello.

Bible Studies for Life

with Evelyn Gibson



Poll: Americans still prefer traditional marriage

WASHINGTON (BP) — Despite four victories by same sex marriage supporters on Election Day on Nov. 6, a solid majority of voters nationwide still believe marriage is between one man and one woman, according to a new poll.

The survey by the Polling Company shows that 60% of voters in this year's election agreed that "marriage is between one man and one woman." Fifty-one percent agreed strongly. All total, 34% disagreed with the statement.

The poll of 800 people who voted either on Election Day or who voted early was conducted Nov. 7.

Voters in Maine, Maryland, and Washington state chose this year to legalize same sex marriage, while voters in Minnesota defeated a constitutional amendment that would have defined marriage as between one man and one woman. The margins ranged from 51-49% in Minnesota, to 52-48% in Maryland, to 53-47% in Maine and Washington.

After a string of over 30 victories nationwide over several years for those in favor of traditional marriage, the results were the first time voters in any state approved same sex marriage. Several states had previously legalized same sex marriage by judicial or legislative fiat.

The outcome of the marriage votes in four very liberal states has caused some to speculate as to whether the American people have changed their views on marriage. This scientific poll shows that the answer to that is no, they have not changed," said Brian

Brown, president of the National Organization for Marriage in Washington, DC.

Traditional marriage is one that draws support across party lines, Brown said, noting that the traditional side on the ballots outperformed the Republican ticket by an average of 6.6 points in the four states.

A financial disadvantage contributed to the losses by traditionalists, Brown said, with his side being outspent at least four to one. "We were fighting the entirety of the political establish-

ment in most of the states, including sitting governors in three of the states who campaigned heavily for gay marriage."

"Our opponents and some in the media will attempt to portray the election results as a changing point in how Americans view gay marriage, but that is not the case. Americans remain strongly in favor of marriage as the union of one man and one woman. The election results reflect the political and funding advantages our opponents enjoyed in these very liberal states."



PLANTING CHICAGO CHURCHES — David Choi, pastor of Church of the Beloved in Chicago's University Heights neighborhood, addresses North American Mission Board trustees during a vision tour highlighting church plants and needs throughout Chicago's urban core. (BP photo courtesy of NAMB)

NAMB trustees see needs firsthand in Chicago visit

CHICAGO (BP and local reports)

— "I was raised in a place where there's a Baptist church on every corner," North American Mission Board trustee Sissy Franks said during the board's recent visit to Chicago. "When I come here and I see this, then my heart is reminded that we have much to do."

"To see the work of a church planter in places where they leave their home and family and come because of mission, vision, and passion for sharing the Gospel reminds me there is much to do — and everybody needs to be involved," said Franks, a member of Philadelphia Church in Deville, La.

Franks and other North American Mission Board trustees, in conjunction with their trustee meeting in Chicago on Oct. 10, saw firsthand the great need for churches and missionaries to reach the United States' third-largest city for Christ.

Among the 8.7 million people in metro Chicago's 77 neighborhoods, there are only 308 Southern Baptist churches, one for every 32,000 residents.

Trustees dedicated a day to visiting three Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) church planters who have recently begun new congregations in Chicago. In places like Wicker Park, the University District, and Northlake, trustees saw eclectic and impoverished boroughs often within several blocks of each other.

Trustee Chuck Herring, senior pastor of First Church in Collierville, Tenn., and former senior pastor of First Church, Richland, recounted that "the thing that God said to my heart coming from the Deep South is I must never ever take the Gospel for granted, and I've got to teach my people not to take the Gospel for granted."

Chicago encompasses 670,000 college students and is home to 2,000 people groups speaking 200 languages. Among the diversity, Southern Baptists are starting churches with multiplication built into their DNA.

Church planter David Choi, pastor of Church of the Beloved, hopes to start several churches throughout metro Chicago. He's reaching a very diverse section of the city and mentoring younger planters to join forces.

"It's amazing to have people from all over North America come here and pray for us," Choi said of the trustees' visit. "Our partnerships with Southern Baptists are what have made our work possible, and we are so grateful."

As early as 1957, Chicago was included in the SBC's Big Cities program and received funds for 10 church plants. Today, as a Send North America City, Chicago is still on the map as an urban center in spiritual need.

For more information on NAMB's Send North America: Chicago emphasis, visit www.namb.net/chicago.

Anonymous author urges fellow Christians to 'embrace obscurity'

NASHVILLE (BP) — The world is filled with people who live and die in anonymity. To those who yearn for true success as modeled by Jesus, the anonymous author of a new book points toward humility, service, sacrifice, and surrender.

The author of *Embracing Obscurity: Becoming Nothing in Light of God's Everything*, released by B&H Publishing Group, chose to publish under the name, "Anonymous," and to maintain nearly complete anonymity. Only one B&H editor and a couple of executives at Nashville-based LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, the parent of B&H, know the identity of Anonymous.

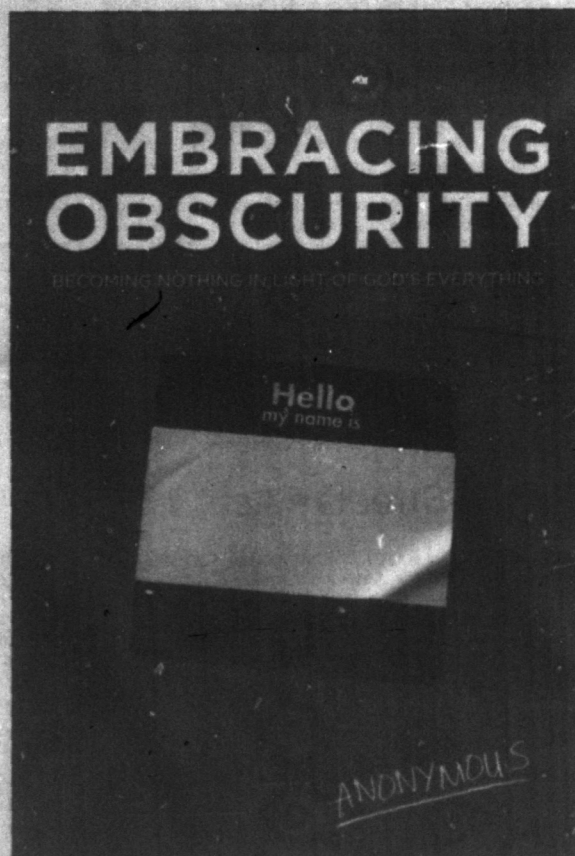
He/she reportedly is a well-established author who communicates via a specially created email address that helps maintain his/her anonymity.

"We did not know anything about the identity of the author when we received the manuscript," said Selma Wilson, vice president of B&H Publishing Group, "but the message of the book grabbed us immediately. It is exactly what we are about at B&H — bringing an engaging and substantive Christ-centered message."

In quotes provided to B&H by Anonymous, he/she said, "This book is a call to stop imitating the world's formula for success and instead follow the model of our humble King. I couldn't think of any way to reconcile that message while simultaneously promoting myself, so I chose to take up the challenge of embracing my own obscurity."

In the book, Anonymous writes that obscurity "can be either assigned (by God) or chosen (by us). I don't know whether one is harder than the other. I just know that from a prideful, human point of view, either can gnaw at us. We don't want to live as one in a crowd. We don't want to be just another person living in a subdivision in the suburban sprawl that has become America."

"It is my desire to awaken the church to the unsurpassing peace and pleasure of becoming nothing in light of God's everything,"



the author added via the quotes provided B&H. "Even when an overarching, global obscurity has been assigned to us, we still have a choice of whether to embrace personal obscurity — an obscurity of heart as much as position — and that is the message I believe God has for us, a message He modeled as well as taught."

The author has modeled the principles of the book well, Wilson said. "Writing a book, especially one with deep transparent personal themes, is a painstaking event, and to do that with zero credit is a tremendous thing. The message Anonymous brings forward in this book is very appropriate for the evan-

gelical world today."

To maintain the integrity of his/her anonymity, the author will not make any appearances or speaking engagements in support of the book, Wilson said. However, Anonymous will interact with visitors at Facebook.com/EmbracingObscurity. In addition, Anonymous is available for interviews via email.

B&H's print and digital releases for the trade, church, and academic markets include New York Times No. 1 bestsellers, *The Love Dare*, and *The Vow*, as well as the award-winning HCSB Study Bible.